

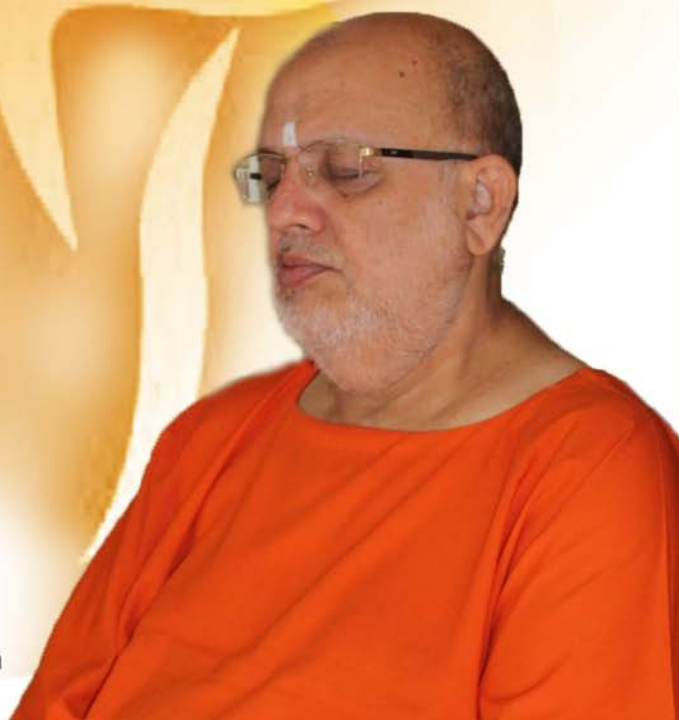
VEDANTA ARTICLES

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Part : 1

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THE BLESSINGS OF KNOWLEDGE



Knowledge alone liberates us from all miseries, pain & poverty. It has indeed transformed our whole world & lives. The profound power of knowledge has not only blessed our worldly life, it alone singularly liberates us from the subjective clutches of time & space to help us awake to the transcendental realm. Knowledge and knowledge alone should be our top priority in life, not only to help make our day to day lives

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more meaningful & productive but also to help awake to the divine & timeless state of Godhood. This is the summum bonum of human life , our ultimate goal, the real test of our right understanding, and this is what was called as Moksha by the great Rishis of yore.

The secret of success of all developed nations (if at all it is a secret) is their singular dedication to the pursuit of knowledge. They encourage pursuit of knowledge, provide more than sufficient funds for education & research, respect knowledgeable people, invite good brains from all over the world to come over to their place. They not only make laws accordingly but even bend the rules for facilitating such pursuits. It is their dedication to knowledge which is bearing appropriate fruits in terms of their material prosperity & comforts. They deserve their prosperity just as we deserve our lack of it. If the pursuit of knowledge blesses our lives, then the flip side also is equally true. The absence of right knowledge and understanding is the greatest curse of human life.

THE BLESSINGS OF KNOWLEDGE

We are an independent nation free to plan our priorities and plans. We have Planning Commission planning for optimum utilization of our resources, but something has indeed gone fundamentally wrong somewhere. The people with right brains have to look for more fertile lands elsewhere, the masses cannot even read & write after fifty years of self-rule, the definition of literacy has been brought down to the ability to read & write one's name, the state of schools is in shambles, and it takes a supreme court diktat to put an end to reservations in super-speciality jobs.

If because of some earlier social problems some people did not get proper chance to come up, and reservation was considered to be a way out, then fine, but it is fifty years now, a whole new generation has been born, yet we are where we are. It is not the figures which we are interested in but results. The results reveal distorted priorities. Why should our countrymen be denied the right to education, why should brains run elsewhere, why should we not have high-profile in-

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house research wings, why cant we have tax concessions for encouraging research & education in a big way. If the government cannot do its job, why not pass on the baton to other countrymen. Keeping people ignorant appears to be in the self-interest of our politicians, just as raking up & sustaining distortions in the name of caste is in the self-interest of others. It is the vote-bank politics which is really behind the present state of affairs. Politics has become a haven for the most smart & successful criminals. We cannot expect to have the right priorities of knowledge from those who have had no interest in it throughout their lives. Till we have these priorities it will be the destiny of the masses & country at large to be condemned in this way.

The young ones have to indeed depend on the system for some basic grounding, but the grown ups need not always depend on government for helping change their priorities. We have to do it ourself, without any help from anyone. May be God wants us to work for such goals. Let us do whatever we can to encour-

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age the pursuit of knowledge. We have to work both at the personal and social level for such goals and priorities.

At the personal level let us always keep some time for reading good books, and listening to lectures & discourses of knowledgeable people. It is a must. Keep out some time just for yourself and pursue the understanding of some new thing continuously, not just for your profession but of other aspects of life too. Poetry, literature, philosophy, art, music etc. As a quiet mind is most suitable for understanding anything, appropriate measures & exercises should be taken up to make the state of our minds most suited for this endeavor. A good healthy body, a positively charged yet a quiet observant mind are great assets. Let your respect for knowledge & knowledgeable person be very evident. Invite such people at your place, express your respect in whatever way possible, and discuss your perceptions with them. It is also extremely necessary that a part of our earning should always be spent on matters pertain-

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ing to pursuit of knowledge. Purchase good books and other things which facilitate such pursuits.

The second aspect is our work for such goals in the society & professional field. Encourage the intelligent and knowledgeable people in whatever way felt most appropriate. Give out sometime to work for organisations working in this direction, help some poor children to pursue their studies. Take out a part of your earning to be shared with the less fortunate ones. Give charity to Ashrams & other institutions pursuing such cause.

Do whatever you can to have an open & sensitive mind. Be in the midst of nature at least for a short period in a year, never let arrogance of any of your achievements touch you, and never be conditioned with intense likes & dislikes. Follow the Vedic adage that "Let noble thoughts flow to us from all sides." Don't be under the impression that anything modern is always good or correct and anything old is rubbish. This is an

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arrogance of the most stinking kind. Do not also believe that everything old is gold and everything new is nonsense. What is required is an open mind, which is open to all ideas from all over. Let us have the intelligence to evaluate the merits of anything ourselves. Conditioned people are basically unintelligent people who cannot sieve out right & wrong, good or bad themselves. It is convenient for them to simply brand a thing as new & old, western & eastern, religious or secular and blindly follow one. Such people remain condemned to mediocrity and can never be expected to rise to those great heights which a bhakta of Gyana can. The people who pursue knowledge wholeheartedly not only make their professional & worldly lives very beautiful & successful, but also awake to the Godly state of transcendental divinity in this very life.



JIVATMA & PARAMATMA

Asti - God is there :

Jivatma means the individual self and Paramatma means God. Vedas in their earlier sections reveal the existence of God to man. Man is told of the ways of God, his nature and teachings. God is someone to be loved, because he is himself an embodiment of infinite love. He is revealed as the very creator, sustainer and also the destroyer of the world. Just as all musicians in

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an orchestra have to tune themselves to a basic note being played by one, so also every person has to tune him or herself to that basic harmony and order of the world called God. This facilitates bringing about a holistic vision. Such a person is never alone, on the other hand such person always has company of the highest embodiment of knowledge, love & power. It is a well known fact that it is our thinking which carves out our personality, thus with a single stroke the Vedic masters saw to it that all their followers not only retain the thought of the best and highest but also ultimately be an embodiment of all what God represents.

Asmi - I am that :

The Vedic masters do not merely stop at revealing the existence of God. All religions and religious masters have been talking about these things. The unique aspect of Vedas is to reveal that there is a state in this very life & this very body where this Jivatma discovers its total identity with Paramatma. It was the sum-mum bonum of human life. It was an experience beyond imagination. The contentment was total. It was

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something which he or she always was seeking. It was total liberation from all limitations of time, space and objectivity. They called it Moksha - the total freedom, the ultimate goal of human life. They discovered that Jivatma is & always was Paramatma alone. The duality was born out of ignorance. The seeker is the sought. Like in a dream a person erroneously takes oneself to be something which one is not and suffers unnecessarily, so also are the suffering of man. The final leap to total freedom & fulfillment is merely by some knowledge, the knowledge of Self.

Vedanta - the science of revealing the identity :

It is interesting to note the two words Jiv-atma and Param-atma. Both have the word 'atma' in common. Atma means the Self, that which reveals as the 'I' in the hearts of all. When this 'I' is seen to have a sense of limitation, along with a sense of enjoyership & doership, then such 'I' is referred to as the Jiva-atma. A Jiva is someone who sees himself to be limited by space & time - he is at one place alone and not everywhere,

and his existence is at a particular time alone and not at all times. When these sense of limitations are inquired upon and are realized to be an error then this sense of limitation drops and the same 'I' is seen to be free from these limitations of time & space then this very 'I' is referred to as the Paramatma. Param means that which is free from all limitations of time, space & objectivity i.e. that which is there at all times, all places and in all objects. Thus the word atma which is the common denominator in both these words shows that God is always realized as the very subjective essence of a person and not as some objective reality. The science which facilitates us to conduct this inquiry into the Self is Vedanta, the culmination of which is in the discovery of oneself to be free from all limitations. That person alone is said to have attained proper spiritual health, that person alone makes the best of his or her life, rest are comparable to a sick man, always seeking and seeking, and at the end of it all dying also with all the sense of limitations. They know not the joy & potential of human life. They have missed the boat.

THE POTENTIAL & LIMITATION OF ACTION

Action is signature of life :

Action is verily a signature of life. Life manifests most vividly in the form of actions. If the very life principle is said to be the eternal divinity then its manifestation in the form of action is indeed its divine fragrance. To be able to act is indeed a blessing, and anyone who acts in a dynamic, creative way out of the feeling of well being for all becomes a blessing for all those

around him, and paves the path for his total fulfillment too. Any philosophy of life which gives due importance to action alone facilitates people to make the best of their lives and vice versa any philosophy which professes an inactive life becomes responsible for the fall of that person, society or the nation. So act we must. We must in fact learn more about this potent thing called action. We must know the potential and also the limitations of action.

Act to forge ahead, react to be left behind :

First let us try to understand what exactly is an action ? Any movement of our hands or bodies is not an action. A person turning in his bed while sleeping drops a glass and in the process makes a thief to run away is not said to have performed an action, nor does a person reacting to a situation as per his conditionings is performing any action. Action is one thing and reaction is another. Action is a deliberate & conscious effort

done with a definite objective in mind. If unconsciously you help someone you have not done any Punya karma, similarly if unintentionally if you harm someone you don't commit any sin. That is of course a different matter that a sensitive person sees to it that even unconsciously he or she does not harm any one. Animals are programmed to respond in a particular way and therefore they do not perform any actions. In action there is freedom to choose our response. I may decide my response on the basis of my past experiences or may try out something entirely new. I may respond or may not respond at all. That's freedom. In action there is freedom. In action there is growth and also evolution. Those who don't know what does action actually means simply stagnate. A person who constantly exercises his or her freedom in & through every situation alone acts. Very few people act, most of us merely react. Those who act alone go ahead, rest are left behind.

The potential of action :

In all actions there has to be a clearly defined goal. Greater the clarity of goal, greater will be our energy directed towards it. But, a total action requires something more, there should also be great sensitivity towards others. A deliberate act which is done with such a sensitivity to others as you would expect others to have toward you is called a *Punya karma* or virtuous action, while a *karma* in which in the process of attaining our goals there is total indifference towards others feelings then such an act is called *Paap* or sin. A person who does *punya karma's* not only begets love, consideration & respect of others but also facilitates manifestation of his various latent qualities & potentials. This leads to still better *karma's* and the cyclic effect leads one to still greater prosperity, contentment and betterment of life. On the other hand if a person is too desperate to attain something and in the process resorts to insensitivity & the subsequent *Paap karma's* then his selfish disposition not only ultimately isolates him but

the overloaded mind also cannot bring about its best. Success for such a person is always questionable, and even if success is brought about then also the cost at times is so high and the person inspite of getting what he wants remains a loser. The potential of Punya karma's is great, they can help us attain even the glories & comforts of heavens. So act we must but in a more conscientious way.

The greatest potential of action :

Apart from the above potential there is one more extremely important and great potential of action, which is not so often talked about. That potential pertains to the effect of karma's on our minds rather than its potential in bringing about the desired situation outside. It is the ability of karma to make the mind of a person progressively all the more intelligent, sensitive & strong. The utilization of that potential does not call for any special act, in fact whatever may be the field of action of a person, in & through his or her activities the

above objective can also be simultaneously attained. The change is only in the motivation. The usual motivation in any action is in bringing about a desired extraneous situation. We want something and work for it. Our love lies in some object yonder, and action is merely a means to attain that. Our joys manifest on seeing the results and not earlier. In other words we don't enjoy the very act of doing some thing but always look beyond to something which is yet to come. People who are more bothered about the 'fruits' of action, the very act of doing something is more often a burden, and is left at the earliest opportunity. The very act is never be a matter of great love or joy. If however for a person the very act of doing something becomes a matter of great challenge, love & joy, if somehow the focus is shifted from the fruits of action which always lies in future, to the 'very act' being done in the present, then with such a changed perspective & priority not only the fruits of action will certainly be far better, but at the same time with this intense living in the present the mind starts unfolding its various latent qualities and the per-

son is seen to become all the more efficient, intelligent, sensitive and strong. Do have goals for the future but not at the cost of potential joys at present. Such an act is possible only by people who have an intrinsic sense of well-being, fulfillment & contentment within themselves. It is such people alone who can afford to act in such a way. They may have great faith in God - the dispenser of all fruits of actions, or their philosophy of life may convince them of their basic divinity. Whatever be the case if they can afford to act with the above motivation then they open the floodgates of their higher growth & evolution. Such a karma where having once discerned the goal, the entire attention & love is in the very act of doing the karma, and in & through his actions is amazed at the beauty & order of things around becoming in his heart a fan, rather a devotee of one who runs the entire show, is called as the Nishkama karma. Every act of this person is an act of love, in every conceivable way. These people enjoy their very work and are never bother about retirement, the day when they will probably be free of all this hassle. A person

who inculcates such an attitude in & through all his or her actions is called as a Karma Yogi. Lord Krishna never feels tired to glorify such an act or such a person. Such an act is ones doorway to total freedom. Not only doorway to freedom, it verily is an act of freedom.

The limitations of action :

As the saying goes there are always two sides of any coin. Even though karma's can take us to the mind boggling heights of heavenly pleasures, they can help bring about beautiful virtues in the mind, they can bring about great purity of mind in the form of detachment, contemplativeness & sensitivity, yet karma's have some limitations. The greatest limitation of action is that any thing attained through any of our acts is always transient, it is in the realm of change and thus perishable. No fruits of actions are permanent, no situation is permanent. All what we attain through karma's quickly becomes an object of our memories. Karma is not a means to help attain any thing permanent. If at any

point in time we aspire for something permanent then this great & potent thing called karma stands helpless. Luckily that which is permanent should by its very definition be present at all times and places, and therefore has to be present right here & now. Such a thing which is already attained needs no karma but merely some deeper awareness, knowledge. Basically karma's have a role to play whenever we want to produce, modify, purify or attain something. If this is the goal then karma alone has to be the means, there is no other way, but in cases where there is no production, modification, purification or attainment involved then karma's have no role to play. A person who wants to know his Self or wants to know the truth of things around, then karma's have no role to play. The basic essence of everyone, the Atma is declared by the great Rishis of Upanishads as ever-pure, ever-attained and free from the possibility or necessity of any modification. It is that which is permanent, divine and also embodiment of joy. Atma is something to be known and not attained, for the simple reason that it is our very Self. If we want to know the

Self, then we should not only keep aside all karma's but for a time being even quieten the habitual tendency to act. At such a moment this habit to act becomes a positive nuisance.

The plan of action :

The plan of action thus suggested by scriptures is to first learn to act - deliberately, consciously & later in a Nishkama way, selflessly, lovingly. Having fulfilled our various desires & responsibilities and having brought about the necessary purity of mind, turn your attention to that which is permanent. When such a goal becomes dear then don't let even this tendency to act turn your attention to any thing extraneous. Such people should go to their Sat-guru - men of knowledge pertaining to such things, and try to know that which is here & now. Know your Self, that which you always are and always was. Having known your true, divine Self directly, let your fulfillment manifests at all the levels of your personality. Such people have nothing to attain

for themselves, their account has been settled, they live to serve. Such people act yet they don't. Let people call their acts in what ever way they like, they live spontaneously, exuding the divine fragrance of divinity & love all around them without any barriers of caste, creed, sex, nationality or even religions. They truly become a world citizen.



THE FOUR PURUSHARTHAS

Have a clear goal of life :

Purusharthas means that for which a person strives for. It implies our goals of life. It is extremely important that our goals of life should be very very clear. Just as before starting a journey we should be very clear about our destination, so also before starting any worldly or spiritual effort, we should very clear as to what we are

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trying to achieve, what is our goal. The scriptures also before talking about the various sadhana-the means, first tell us about the sadhya-the end. As it is the lack of knowledge of goal which results in absence of enthusiasm to take up any sadhana, so it is very important to know our goals of life, our purusharthas.

Look within to identify your goal :

To understand our goals of life we should not look outside, as to where the world is going, but should rather look within, as to what do I really aspire & want. For this we should ask ourselves a very fundamental question - What is that attaining which I will be fully satisfied ? Dont be in a hurry, take your own time and discover the answer to this important question. You will find that most of our so called goals are only means for some other end, they do not really come under the category of goals. We find that very few people have clarity about this fundamental thing. They may say that they are modern educated people and do not blindly

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follow anyone, but this is what they are doing, blindly following others, for the simple reason that they themselves are not clear as to what do they really want. They join some rat race and in the end realize that they have been on a meaningless trip, by then it is too late. So let's pause and try to know what is it that which I really want, what is that attaining which I will certainly quench my thirst. Let's look within, introspect & discover. The knowledge of Self starts with such fundamental questions. The scriptures do not ask us to blindly follow someone but only help us conduct this inquiry. This is called the inquiry into Purusharthas of life.

Artha - seeking security :

The first & foremost thing which everyone is seeking is security. Every person appears to be basically insecure, and that is not a comfortable feeling. Whatever is understood by each person to even remotely provide us some security becomes our goal. Money is the most important worldly resource to provide us some

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security, so that's what people want - desperately. The amount of desperation is many a times directly proportional to the extent of insecurity within. We can't think of life without money. If we were not so insecure then there would not have been any thoughtless desperation. It would be just one important thing for which necessary intelligent efforts are called for. Money is not only a means to some security, but it is also a means for getting enjoyments, comforts of life. Remember discovering security is our main objective and as money plays an important part to play here let's recognize it as our First Purushartha, called Artha.

Money plays a very important role in life but is never a complete answer to the problem of providing complete security. Nevertheless, every person must be taught the art of acquiring money and bring about a sense of freedom & independence. The most intelligent way to acquire money is to discover a way by which money runs after you and not vice versa. For this it is extremely necessary to specialise in a particular

field which is compatible to your nature & capacities, and make that specialization a means to serve the society. If you really love your work, if you are a specialist in your field, if you have an attitude that through your work you contribute to the society in some positive way, then rest assured money will follow you. In & through this pursuit it is extremely important to remember that people with lots of money do solve some of their initial problems, but discover new avenues of insecurities, and one of them is how to protect this hard earned money itself. Don't become complacent after acquiring some wealth, because the very reason for which you have got all this itself is yet to be really achieved. While striving to get more & more money always ask this question to yourself - Am I fully secure now ? Never be overwhelmed by some achievements so as to forget your own real aspiration. Keep striving & inquiring till you become really secure within. However, to begin with do discover ways & means to acquire necessary wealth.

Kama -

know the art of enjoying pleasures :

Having acquired some money, having got some security the next step for everyone is to use this money for your comforts, enjoyments & fulfilling your duties, desires & responsibilities. That which we want next is the experience of fulfillment, joy & bliss. As various sensual enjoyments are seen to provide that experience we go for them. So fulfillment of our desires is the second Purusharthas - called Kama. Lets remember that we do not acquire or enjoy the objects for objects sake but for the sake of a satisfying blissful experience. The moment an object starts giving us the opposite we change our paths. So even though we should & do realize that various objects are means to some end, and not the very end itself, still we should learn the finer secrets of making the best of our enjoyments & experiences. Our full availability is the secret of making the best of all our enjoyments. A person whose mind is free from all worries, hankerings and egoistic problems alone is available for experiences. Necessary training is required for bringing about such a mental disposition.

Dharma - conscientious living :

The third purushartha is called Dharma. Dharma is always mentioned first whenever the scriptures talk about the four purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha. This is because of its all-round & far reaching benefits to help bring about an ideal disposition which facilitates attainment of all other purusharthas. The word Dharma has wide implications, and no english word does full justice to it, yet in the context of our discussion we can say that Dharma implies a conscientious, orderly & holistic living. Man is a social being, he lives amongst his own kind, in group, and every person has to attain his or her purusharthas of artha & kama. This being the case it is necessary to frame some ground rules in the spirit of live & let live. That's the spirit behind Dharma. It makes us sensitive to others, makes us care for others, it brings necessary magnanimity to look at others as part of one whole. It helps us to expand our family, brings about a holistic vision. The moment we see the whole world as one great whole, we also

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become sensitive to a supreme intelligence, who has not only created this beautiful world & cosmos, but is also running the show. As no effect is possible without a cause, we infer the existence of a creator when we see this beautiful creation. If creation is so beautiful, how will the creator be. Dharma thus wakes us up to the existence of God. Dharma does not make us afraid of God, but rather shows that he is someone who deserves our greatest love & reverence. We are his creation, act as per his dictates, will live as long as he likes and will leave when he so wishes. We cannot influence his wishes but should know his ways & means and live accordingly, in a spirit of surrender & love.

The basic spirit of science is to conquer nature while dharma motivates us to respect it and live in tune with it. Science, even though says that there can be no effect without a cause yet does not accept any intelligent cause of the creation. They prefer to say it was all an accident, a big bang that started this whole process. Dharma on the other hand says that the crea-

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tion is so orderly, beautiful & purposeful that we cannot in our wildest dreams think that this is all a product of an accident. We are simple minded people, who on seeing a creation believe in the presence of a creator, and plan out our lives accordingly by keeping him into account, always. We look upon the whole creation as a great, grand orchestra which is already presenting a beautiful music, we have just joined the orchestra and should be sensitive to the harmony and tune ourselves to it. Just as only that person can enjoy the music who becomes sensitive to it, so also only that person can enjoy the holistic living who sees a basic harmony & order around. The benefits of turning our attention on God, being sensitive to his ways & means, the order & harmony etc. are so great that even if God was not there we would have loved to invent him. But as he is very much there so the question also does not arise. When we accept the existence of someone who is an embodiment of knowledge, power, love, compassion & holistic vision, then anyone who loves & reveres such a being will not only be free from various self imposed

problems, but will also start being an embodiment of all what God represents. The train is already moving we unload ourselves and live life fully, without worries. Acceptance of God is the essence of Dharma. This not only helps us become a better person here but also helps us to attain our Artha & Kama in a better way too. Not only this but acceptance of God prepares us for our real goal of life, called Moksha.

Moksha - freedom from all sense of limitations :

The fourth Purushartha is called Moksha, literally it means liberation. Liberation is not some posthumous state to be attained later after death, but is a state to be attained right here in this very life. Lets see this also in the context of our discussion. Until now we have seen that every person wants security & happiness, and thus should learn the secrets of Artha & Kama, which are the means to acquire relative security & pleasure here in this life. This journey should be a very conscientious

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one too, we should be sensitive to others and thereafter live our lives. Now, presuming that there is a person who has learned the art of acquiring wealth, enjoys the various pleasures nicely, and also cares for his brethren around, what more does one want. He appears to be an ideal person, what bondage does that person have. What is that from which he needs to be liberated from ? Well, the great thinkers of Vedic times want us to see this more deeply ? Has a person who wanted security and acquired enough wealth become really secure ? As long as we have to depend on anything whatsoever reveal a state wherein there is no insecurity whatsoever ? Doesn't the very necessity to hang on to some crutch show some lack, some weakness within ? Fine, we have various worldly pleasures at our disposal, but doesn't the very necessity to get more & better pleasures show that our cup within is yet to be full ?

Real security within will be revealed only when the very desire to get security becomes redundant. So also the dawn of real happiness will be inferred only

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when there are no self-centered desires any more. Not that such a person will be averse to prosperity or comforts, but is not averse to absence of these too. Motivations at such levels disappear, such a person is at home every where. Such a state of existence alone is real freedom, that's liberation. Liberation is freedom from a sense of lack, a sense of insecurity & fear. This is possible when a person discovers that he or she is free from all limitations of time & space, that one is really the transcendental reality itself. The taking of ourselves as a limited being is an erroneous conclusion of our mind. This is not true. If there is one basic reality in the world then that reality should be the basic essence of all. That is what the Upanishads are thundering - you are that. Turning our minds from all other preoccupation's and starting a process of deep introspection to realize our basic essence is what Moksha is all about. It is not turning away from life all together, but till you discover your true Self. Having known your true being live like a truly healthy man, this is how all avatars and saints lived. A life that leaves your footprints even on the sand of time.

MEDITATION

The increasing inquisitiveness
for Meditation :

Suddenly in last few years the word Meditation is on everyone's lips, and it is indeed nice to see that it has become something very desirable too. Whether it is bringing about peace of mind, manifesting of various latent potentials,

increasing concentration, invoking grace of God, increasing devotion, contemplating on your Self, or even awakening to the blissful experience of the transcendental reality, the unanimous choice of means appears to have become - Meditation. Along with this development have cropped up dozens of kinds of Meditation. Regarding its process, the spectrum ranges from regulating your pranas, chanting meaningless words, meaningful words, contemplating on some mantra or even not thinking at all. The postures range from sitting, standing, lying down or even in action - by yourself or even along with someone else. All are said to be in meditation or rather in the process of gliding into the divine state of samadhi. When the demand has produced such a myriad of supply it has become necessary to see what our scriptures have to say in this matter before jumping in anyone of the aforesaid bandwagons to redemption.

Different facets of Meditation :

Meditation means Dhyana. Grammatically, the word Dhyana is created from the root 'Dhyaе' which means to think deeply. Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras (which is the most authoritative text on the study of mind) says that 'Dhyana is the ability of the mind to flow towards an object without any interruption' (Yoga Su.3/2), not merely to bring about its awareness but its deeper understanding. In concentration we simply turn our attention to something, while in dhyana there is also a process of understanding. Half of our questions get answered when we merely see such fundamental definitions from authoritative sources. People who had coined the word and also used it technically definitely did not imply the various connotations which are prevalent today. Most of the people are using or rather mis-using the word to communicate their own concepts & fancies, and not what has been coming down to us from ages. With due respect to the divine experiences of all we should first like to understand what the scrip-

tures like Gita & Upanishads have to say in this context. Various questions come up in the mind of someone who wants to practice Meditation. Apart from What is Meditation ? other important questions are : What all is possible by Meditation ? What is the role of Meditation in our Spiritual unfoldment ? and of course, What is the process of Meditation ? We should all definitely try to understand these things first before going for just anything served in the name of Dhyana.

Meditation a must :

If Meditation implies bringing about a mind ideal for understanding any thing properly and the ability to identify with it completely, then all achievements are possible only with the ability to meditate. Whatever be your problem or challenge it is your ability to think and come to right conclusions which really matters. Ability to meditate not only indicates existence of positive qualities but also the ability to sublimate the negative ones. It is not only the door to all success outside, but is

also an important ability to help bring about the awakening within. Meditation is basically an ability, which has to be applied for some thing. The ability to meditate by itself is not opposed to ignorance. Ignorance of our real nature alone brings all misapprehensions and the subsequent bondage, and therefore knowledge alone can eliminate it. Even though the very ability to meditate is not opposed to anything it does have a very important role. All sadhakas whether they know the truth or not should meditate. There are broadly two kinds of meditation. Upasana and Nididhyasana. The first one is for people who are yet to wake to the divine state within and the other for those who are enlightened ones.

Role of Meditation :

If not knowing the real nature of Self is the cause of all problems of mankind, then in order to bring about proper knowledge all what one has to do is to undertake Sravana, Manana of Vedantic scriptures through

an appropriate teacher, and then revel in the glory of your divine Self in order to assimilate the invaluable prasada of one's Guru. In both sravana and manana ability to think deeply to the exclusion of all other thoughts is a very important requisite. If deep thinking to the exclusion of all other thoughts is meditation, then meditation does have a very important role. However, there is something more to meditation than simply deep thinking. In it is involved an intense feeling towards that which is the 'object' of meditation to the extent of self-forgetfulness. Meditation with reference to Self-knowledge implies turning your entire attention to your very being. No more any reinforcement of conviction, no thinking, no requirement of pramanas, no elimination of any doubts. You know it, now with all the attention at your command you just be that, intensely, silently. Intense awareness of the truth of yourself and that of the world just helps you to glide into the state of being - the samadhi.

Types of Meditation - Upasana & Nididhyasana :

Broadly there are two kinds of meditation, they are Upasana and Nididhyasana. One is for the ignorant one and other for an enlightened sadhaka. Someone said that 'If you don't know the Truth on what are you going to meditate, and if you already know the truth then why meditate.' No, meditation does have a role to play in both the cases. In case a person does not know the truth, then just out of faith towards our scriptures & guru, we take some thing which represents the ultimate and then we turn our attention on it and meditate. Such a meditation is called Upasana, and it has innumerable benefits, ranging from re-inforcement of our faith, bringing about devotion for God and also manifesting various latent qualities. Upasana is based on faith and ultimately it reinforces this very faith, and in the process brings various other benefits. Such is the place of upasana that it forms an important part of the daily routine of a faithful person. Every important work was undertaken only after doing some upasana. Japa

or chanting the name of God is also a kind of upasana. The scriptures enjoin that karma & upasana should be done daily with equal degree of importance. Ignoring one is said to bring about various negative consequences. If however, the meaning of scriptures has been revealed to you, if you directly know the truth of yourself, if you now know Brahman first hand, then turning your entire attention to the truth of yourself so as to bring about its intense awareness (gyana-vritti) and reveling in that is called Nididhyasana. Nididhyasana facilitates complete assimilation of this new knowledge about ourself, it helps to eliminate all wrong notions which had trickled pretty deep into our unconscious minds. So before knowledge one should do upasana, and after the dawn of understanding do Nididhyasana. Once you have assimilated the knowledge then there are no injunctions or prohibitions for you. Do whatever you feel like doing. You may meditate or may not meditate, you are indeed totally free. Meditation cannot give you anything more. It has no role for you. You have achieved all that has to be achieved.

The Process of Meditation :

The process of meditation involves resorting to steps which facilitate introvertedness and quietude of mind. Whatever factors influence our minds to either disturb its quietude or make it extroverted have to be taken into consideration and become part of our sadhana. Even though what influences the mind of one may not necessarily influence the other, yet the scripture being a complete treatise deals with all possible factors and then leaves it to the discretion of the individual concerned to chart his own specific course.

The following steps are recommended for anyone taking up meditation :

1. Choose a time when physically and mentally you are fresh and relaxed. When externally there are least disturbances. When the ambiance around is positive and elevating. All such criteria are fulfilled if, after a good night sleep one gets up early in the

morning for a session of meditation. Meditation at such time doesn't bring about sleep for the simple reason that one has already had a good sleep.

2. Choose a clean, nicely ventilated place, free from mosquito's etc. Take a semi-soft, steady and clean asana to sit down. Direction is not very important, but if it is brahma-muhurt then prefer facing east, the direction of sun rise. Sit down with legs folded, back straight, and head in line with back. Hands should hang loosely and fingers should be held together in front. The posture has to be such that even if we dis-identify with the body then also it doesn't fall. It may take some time to get into this habit of sitting properly.

3. Closing the eyes softly do some deep breathing or few pranayams. Then let the normal breathing follow. Sit completely still. Feel relaxed. Make it a point not to move at all, sit like a statue.

4. Charge your mind with emotion of bhakti. With heartfelt gratitude & devotion remember the ever flowing grace of God on you. Starting from this human life, to the opportunity to work for spiritual unfoldment, it is all his blessing. Let the feeling of blessedness overtake you. Once such a state is brought about, then just quietly sit in that blissful state, thoughtlessly. Let it overwhelm you. With this the mind keeps aside all rajo & tamo guna and there comes about predominance of sattva guna.

5. It is only after such initial preparation that inquiry into self-knowledge should be undertaken. Taking some mantra of Upanishad or other such Vedantic statement, whose meaning has been revealed to you by your teacher, think deeply about it in order to directly SEE its meaning. As the basic purport of all vedantic scriptures is to reveal the self which is complete and the ultimate, so having seen this fact, just be that. Let its significance trickle down deep into your mind. Let this knowledge have its

own effect. Don't let even the thought of your old identity surface.

6. Even when the true meaning of scriptures is being seen the mind will progressively become more & more quiet & contented. Attainment of quietude by becoming aware of the true meaning of scriptures is called Savikalpa Samadhi, while being charged with this awareness to such an extent that you just be that and thereafter all awareness also drops, or rather the effort to retain the awareness is not necessary any more, then such a state is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

This is the kind of meditation as revealed in the Vedantic scriptures. An upasaka should first limit him or herself to the first four steps properly. Once the ability of this is accomplished then slowly try the fifth step. Don't hurry. Take all the time in the world, but SEE the meaning of scriptures. There alone lies your redemption.

THE SIX PRAMANAS

Any knowledge of even the existence of an object takes place in our minds. The mind becomes conscious of the various 'objects' by the various 'faculties' available to it. The very fact the mind has various faculties at its disposal shows that knowledge of different objects call for taking resort of different means. It is extremely important that we take resort to the right means, otherwise even the existence of that object will

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not be evident to us. These 'means of knowledge' are called Pramanas. Before we jump into the bandwagon of people who want to know 'all the different facets' of this beautiful blessing called life, it is extremely important that we first know which all faculties or rather means of knowledge are at our disposal.

The teachers of Advaita Vedanta philosophy have gone into this aspect of the process of knowledge in great detail, and have enumerated 'six' pramanas. Which pramana has to be resorted to & also when, is decided by the situation and the nature of object concerned. These six means of knowledge are Pratyaksha (Perception), Anumana (Inference), Upamana (Comparison), Arthapatti (Postulation), Anupalabdhi (Non-apprehension), and Sabda (Verbal Testimony). These are the six valid means of knowledge available to us, and we consciously or unconsciously use them too in our day to day life to 'know' various things which come our way. It is extremely important for us to understand each of these pramanas properly, so that we

don't start using the wrong means to know a particular kind of object. This is specially so when we are inquisitive to know the Self, the Atman, which is the ultimate, transcendental, infinite, non-dual truth referred to as the Brahman in the Upanishads. Proper understanding of Pramanas not only facilitates channelising of our energy properly but also culminates in the attainment & fulfillment of the objective.

1. Pratyaksha :

Pratyaksha or Perception implies direct, immediate cognition. There are two kinds of direct perception, external and internal. The 'external' perception implies cognition of sense objects, namely - sound, touch, form, taste and smell by our five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose). When the sense organs contact their respective objects then the Pratyaksha knowledge takes place. The 'internal' perception means the direct & immediate cognition of pain, pleasure, love, hate, anger, knowledge or ignorance

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of various objects etc. in & by our minds. The Acharyas elaborately reveal that in any direct perception, the awareness existing at the level of mind of the person desirous to know an object, as though flows out through his respective sense organ and envelops the available & illumined object. This awareness is thereafter presented to the knower in the mind as a thought of the object, who then 'knows' the object. The entire process is extremely fast and implies the involvement of both the mind and the sense organs in all direct perception. Sitting in one place the knower knows even far off objects directly, provided they come in the range of our sense organs. The immediacy of direct cognition is the intrinsic characteristic of perceptual knowledge, and does not merely depend on the organs of perception.

In all direct perception the knowledge is extremely clear but its scope is very limited. What we can directly see not only constitutes an extremely small iota of the wide spectrum of things existing in this universe, but many a times that which is directly cognised is far

from truth. We have an extremely beautiful creation right in front of our eyes, but we don't see a creator directly, but as there can't be an effect without a cause so we have to take resort of some other valid means of knowledge to know that inevitable creator. So also regarding the internal perceptions, the thoughts are gushing through our minds, but we don't directly see their cause, which has to be inevitably there. Moreover, we directly see a rising sun but astonishingly our deeper probes reveal that the sun never rises. Thus come the great necessity of other means of valid knowledge.

2. Anumana :

Literally translated the word anumana means 'knowing after'. It means the method by which knowledge is derived from another knowledge. It is an indirect, mediate knowledge. We have knowledge of an invariable relationship between two things and on that basis while seeing one we deduce the presence of the other. Thus anumana refers to the logical process

of gaining knowledge. The knowledge thus gained is called inferential knowledge or the logical deduction. The nearest word to anumana is inference. We say it is nearest word simply because of a slight difference between the exact process of logical deduction in Eastern thought as compared to the Western system of logical deduction.

Perception forms the basis of anumana, but at the core of all inferential knowledge lies the knowledge of vyapti or the 'invariable concomitance', the invariable relationship between the two objects. We know on the basis of our perceptual knowledge that wherever there is smoke there is fire (the opposite however may not be true). Having known the invariable connection between the two we can logically deduce the presence of fire whenever we see smoke. This is anumana.

In all inferential knowledge there are definite steps to be followed. The following steps are accepted

for logical deduction of knowledge by the teachers of Advaita Vedanta :

- a. Perceptual evidence - We see smoke on the hill
- b. Invariable concomitance - Wherever there is smoke there is fire, as seen in kitchen.
- c. Conclusion - Therefore the hill has fire

3. Upamana :

The Mimamsakas & Advaitins define Upamana as the process by which the knowledge of A's similarity to B is gained from the perception of B's similarity to A, which has been seen elsewhere. This methodology is seen as distinct from mere inference, and is thus accepted as a valid mediate method of knowledge. For example, a person who has seen his cow at home goes to a forest and sees a gavaya (a wild cow but without dewlap). The person sees the similarity 'This gavaya is like my cow', and on this basis also concludes the opposite to be equally true, that 'My cow is like this gavaya'. Thus by upamana he gains the knowledge of

his cow's similarity to the gavaya from the perception of the gavaya's similarity to his cow.

Upamana is a distinct means of knowledge, and cannot be clubbed under anumana, because we cannot have a universal proposition that a thing is similar to whatever is similar to it. Such a knowledge cannot be gained without the observation of the two similar things together. The Advaitins use this method of knowledge by comparison & similarity to logically communicate the nature of Brahman and various other things. Brahman is said to be resplendent as the sun. By perceiving the luminosity of the sun, the seeker can appreciate the terms like the self-luminosity of Brahman.

4. Arthapatti :

This means postulation, supposition or presumption of a fact. It is a distinct valid method of mediate knowledge. It is in fact a method of assumption of an unknown fact in order to account for a known fact

that is otherwise inexplicable. The classic example of this method of knowledge is a fat person A says that he never eats in the day, then we can easily postulate that he eats in the night, for the simple reason that without this assumption his fatness & also his getting fatter cannot be explained. Arthapatti can either be from what is seen or from what is heard. The use of this method in Vedanta is in assuming rightly the implications of Upanishadic statements. Like in the statement 'The knower of Self transcends grief'. Here we see that merely knowledge destroys grief, then it can be assumed without any doubt, that all grief has to be false then alone it can be destroyed merely by knowledge. So this is assumption.

5. Anupalabdhi :

The Advaitins and the Mimasaka school of Kumarila Bhatt believe Anupalabdhi to be a separate independent pramana. It literally means non-apprehension. Non-existence of a thing is apprehended by

its non-perception. By not seeing a jar in a place one knows that it is not there. We use this method of knowledge also very often, and this is evident from statements like : 'There is no teacher in the class-room', 'There is no sound here', 'This flower has no fragrance' etc. It may seem paradoxical that non-apprehension of a thing is a means to the apprehension of its non-existence (abhava). But in fact both non-perception as well as perception serve as a means to get various knowledge, for the simple reason that the knower is conscious of both. They lead to positive & negative experiences. Knowledge of non-existence of a thing can be on the basis of direct or indirect knowledge. It could either be on the basis of our immediate non-perception of a thing or even on the basis of inference or verbal testimony. In the former the knowledge is immediate while in the latter case, which is applicable in suprasensual objects, the knowledge of abhava of a thing is mediate.

6. Sabda :

Sabda pramana is verbal testimony. It is also called 'apta-vakyas' (statement of a trust-worthy person', and agama (authentic word). A verbal statement, uttered or written, is man's most potent instrument for transmitting knowledge. We learn mostly by means of words. An oral or written message is a universal mode of communication. We constantly get various information, direction & knowledge through words. Right from school days to this moment we use words as a valid & effective means of bringing about awareness of things, ideas or emotions. Books, magazines, newspaper, letters, conversations, chats, radio, TV, movies, songs etc. etc. All use or depend on words. We cannot do without verbal testimony.

A verbal statement conveying valid knowledge must have an authentic source which must be free from defects. Only a competent person possessed of knowledge can impart accurate knowledge. Such a knowledge needs no verification, unless ofcourse there is doubt about its reliability. If all that we know from ver-

bal testimony were to await confirmation, then the bulk of human knowledge would have to be regarded as baseless. Among the Western philosophers only a few recognize verbal testimony as a valid & independent means of knowledge, but a majority of Indian philosophers do. Those who do not accept it as an independent method of knowledge do realise its great role but simply club it along with other means like inference etc. The process of verbal knowledge cannot be clubbed with inference because it does not involve any knowledge of invariable concomitance as is the case in inference. So it is a category by itself. It is interesting and also worthwhile to go into the exact process of derivation of meaning from a sentence. At times there is substantive-adjective relationship between the subject & predicate of the sentence and at times there may not be such a relationship, but a non-relational entity could form their locus. Such understanding becomes important when it comes to derivation of meaning from sentences like 'Tat Tvam Asi' (That thou art). Lot of work has been done in regards to derivation of meaning of a sentence, specially by the Mimamsakas. Only

that combination of words is called a sentence when four factors are taken care of. They are expectancy (akanksa), consistency (yogyata), contiguity (asatti), and knowledge of the purport (tatparya-jnanam). Understanding of all this facilitates us to understand why verbal testimony is an independent means of knowledge very different from inference etc.

Having known these 'pramanas', when a qualified 'pramata' (knower) takes resort of these and turns his focus to 'prameya' (object of knowledge) then 'prama' or valid knowledge is instantaneously brought about. The knowledge brought about by any valid means of knowledge is alone valid knowledge, it does not & can not depend on verification by other means, because the other means have no reach to that. The right knowledge does have some definite indications and thus validity of a means is confirmed by the perception of those indications in the pramata. So instead of wasting ones time trying to see a form by our nose we should rather open our eyes and fulfill our aspiration. This alone is the objective of understanding the various means & methods of knowledge at our disposal.

DISCRIMINATION OF THE SEER & SEEN

The discrimination between the seer & seen is a very important & fundamental way of thinking to bring about direct realisation, in Vedantic lore. It is called the Drg-Dryshya Viveka and implies directly identifying all that which is objectifiable and that which objectifies the object of our knowledge. This viveka is used directly or indirectly in all prakriyas to help bring about the awakening within. It is a very subtle process

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and requires a very quiet, intelligent and dynamic mind. Apart from the above qualities it is equally important to have got proper directions from our teachers. Direct access to the teacher is extremely important too.

The Adhikari of DDV (Drg-DryshyaViveka) is one who has got a sufficiently sattvic mind, one bestowed with Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampatti in a relatively good way. The Visaya of DDV is discrimination between the object & subject. The Prayojana of DDV is the directly see the self as self and the not-self as that. The Sambandha between the above visaya & prayojana is direct & not requiring any action whatsoever at any later date, the pratipadya-pratipadaka sambandha.

The whole viveka begins on a very simple & logical basis that the 'seer is always different from the seen'. You are looking at the monitor screen or maybe a printout at this moment, you see it and are therefore different from it. So also anything, you see it and therefore you are different from it. It is as simple as that.

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The ability to know an object does not presuppose the existence of the correct knowledge of ourselves. In fact to know an object properly we just have to forget everything else including ourself and just pay attention to the object of our knowledge. This is what everyone is doing. The world is so fascinating & beautiful, and there is so much to see & experience, and correct knowledge of the Self is not a pre-requisite to know the world outside properly, so we just ignore ourself. With some superficial understanding about ourselves we just remain busy with the world outside. With DDV we can first learn to 'stand apart' and then know both of these aspects very clearly. Initially we should learn to apply DDV at our gross physical levels, and later apply this at subtle levels in our mind.

Initially one should learn to 'stand apart' from all experiences. Learn to develop the 'sakshi-bhava'. The ability to objectively look at the world, situations and problems. This is a great quality by itself. Normally we are so conditioned with our likes & dislikes, that we just

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flow on, rarely pausing to think what & why we are doing what we are doing. 'Sakshi-bhava' or the 'Witness attitude' creates a condition where we look at something not from the point of view of the individual but from the point of view of let's say, a third uninvolved person. We have to play our roles and that also in total freedom. It is this ability which finally helps to bring about the freedom to see things as they are and then live as per our convictions.

There are broadly two stages in the DDV. First, is the ability to see an object of the world as they are, and second is to 'see' the subject as one really is. Both of these are equally important, but the culmination indeed is in the ability to see one Self as we are. Even though the culmination of DDV is in the ability to see oneself as one is, but it should be remembered that this ability is got and polished only with our application of the same in the world outside. So don't ignore the objective world, but use it to invoke & polish your faculties within. So in & through all your activities learn to involve

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yourself thoroughly and also learn to stand apart and analyze objectively. Later see your inner world, and learn to stand apart from your own thoughts & emotions too. This is a great experience by itself. You see all, with greater sensitivity, and are not effected by anything too. This invokes great courage, and you can do that which you could never even think of. You increase your limits & boundaries. However, the final proof of seeing a thing as it is, is in the realisation that this is a realm of change, inert objects which become so important because we choose them to be so. This realisation brings about the real detachment. A detached person has no attachments or aversions, he can be with anything or person, without any reactions. He does not desire to change any situation, and also does not get involved in anything too.

Once a person develops the ability to observe something with full detachment then he should turn inwards and realize who & what is the 'subject' really like. Who am I ? One thing which becomes pretty apparent

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is that I exist inspite of the objects outside, I am Nitya while the objects are aNitya. It is I who turns attention to any thing which we like & then having given importance flow on. I am the illuminator of all objects of experience. The situations come & go but in essence I still remain as I was earlier. I can recollect the memories of my childhood because I still am. The body may change, the mind may change yet I remain. We directly see this fact that the meaning of the word 'I' is different from body, sense organs, pranas, mind or intellect. For the simple reason that I am conscious of all these things. I being there all the time am 'Sat' the existence, being conscious of all things am Chit - the consciousness, and also Anand - because of having unconditioned love towards our Self. The statements like 'Ayam Atma Brahman' start making sense, and we get a great new identity. To the extent this new identity is owned up to that extent we develop greater detachment with the world outside, and our motivations too can change drastically. We suddenly discover yet another reason to act in a Nishkama way. We can afford magnanimity.

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Whenever we change our world too changes simultaneously. The realisation that I am Sakshi, who is of the nature of 'Sat-Chit-Anada' is a great leap forward, but is not the ultimate, there is one more thing which is yet to be realized.

The final step is to realize the relativity or rather the error even of being called a Sakshi. To continue using this word also is a compromise. A person who has come till this stage has no doubt whatsoever about the existence of our Self as Pure Existence & Consciousness, yet due to our own insufficient understanding we continue to impose some limitation on our self. Every word is limited and refers to a limited thing. To encompass the Self with one word is to limit it. Strange is the story of life, we first limit ourself with our own projections and then plan ways & means to break the non-existing shell. To continue referring the Self as Sakshi or Seer is to know our self in reference to the Seen. To hold on to this identity implies holding on to the Seen. Such a person will lose his or her very identity if the 'seen' is removed,

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which has to happen some time or the other. What has to be realized is that to be a 'seer' is only a role, not my real identity, this role comes about when I see an object. Then alone this word or name is applicable to me. I personally transcend this role. 'I' am that which not only pervades all roles but also transcend all of them. They all depend on me and I am not dependent on anything. When there is nothing to see I am not objectifiable, the moment something is presented I become objectifiable. This objectifiable I is the role while the one who transcends that is the real actor, me. I am that infinite, transcendental & all-pervading Consciousness, Brahman. The process of discrimination between the Seer & Seen fulfills itself here, by lifting us to the state of our real non-dual truth.



NITYANITYA VIVEKA



It is indeed a very pertinent question as to why some people can understand the message of these scriptures very easily, while others just do not seem to get the proper wave length. Not knowing the real reasons the tendency to attribute the cause of inability to some superficial factors like varna, ashram, age, sex, nationality, religion, times - like this or that yugas, modern or ancient, or to people of east or west

etc. becomes inevitable. So it is extremely important to know the right qualifications. If at all someone is facing some difficulties then the best way is to see what is it out of these four-fold qualities which the person concerned seems to be lacking in. If at all we continue to give this knowledge to a person without making this point clear, then two things are possible; if the person doesn't have great sraddha on scriptures then the person will brand the text or the entire philosophy as intractable, difficult or even impractical, or if the person has too great a sraddha on scriptures or its author, then he will start taking him or herself as incompetent etc. To avoid both these negative consequences it is extremely important that one should know as to who exactly is ready to go into all this. The Four-fold qualities of the student of Vedanta as revealed in the Vedantic scriptures themselves are : Viveka, Vairagya, Six qualities, & the Yearning for liberation.

Out of these the first one is the discrimination or the Nityanitya Vastu Viveka. The quality of in-depth discrimination (viveka) is the hallmark of human mind. It

is his greatest asset. It is because of this ability alone that man has progressed to mind-boggling heights in various fields. Whether it is the field of science, business, defense, relationships or any thing whatsoever, the understanding of right or wrong pertaining to that field is what makes him a scholar of his field. By education also this ability to see through the truth & untruth of each field is strived to be manifested. Thus not only the power of discrimination is present in one & all, but is also unanimously understood as the greatest asset of human beings. Discrimination is the ability of the intellect to see through a situation, so as to 'see' rice & chaff separately without even physically doing so. A good investor can 'see' the profit or loss in a given situation, even when a layman can't comprehend a thing. This is his power of discrimination in the field of his investments. So also with the experts in all other fields. Thus in discrimination there is no need or question of physical separation of two entities or inter-mingled probabilities, one has to just see through the situation or object, and separate the two in our intellect itself.

When ever in course of ones life, a realisation dawns, that the genesis of all my problems is non-apprehension of the exact truth of life, that the real search starts. Not knowing that which really matters the mind subsequently apprehends that which is untruth as the truth. This further compounds & complicates the problem, and the result is eternal, never ending seeking, along with inevitable heart breaks and discontentment. This is called samsara. With this realisation starts the process of conscious endeavor to know that which is permanent and what is not. If a man really wants to know then he will know, because all he wants is understanding of that which is the truth of all that which is. He is not looking any where beyond, but right here in the present, outside as well as inside. The process of identifying that which is eternal or permanent is basically a very easy job, because that which is the untruth keeps changing constantly and thus keeps declaring its ephemerality. This has just to be kept aside by affirming that 'this is not what I am looking for'. When thus the mind which has been crowded by so many mis-ap-

prehensions is cleaned, then to identify and know that which is eternal is not a difficult job. The straight forward job of knowing the truth as truth does become extremely difficult for one who is yet to realize the untruth as the untruth. Our attention is already on untruth, and one should start from here alone. See the untruth deeply enough so as to appreciate this fact in its entirety that 'this is something ephemeral'. Don't be in a hurry to know the truth, first let the cloud of various mis-apprehensions wither. Then & then alone the 'discrimination' of that which is eternal and that which is not dawns.

In the process of this appreciation, what is subsequently realized is that 'all that which is perceived is transitory', and that light, awareness or consciousness, because of which this realizations are possible alone appears steady. A person endowed with this understanding is said to possess the first pre-requisite of a student of vedanta. It should be noted here that this viveka is not the end but the beginning of the study of vedan-

ta. A person who already has this much understanding is best poised to go deep into the secrets of mind & self. The conviction that 'all that which is perceived is transitory' and 'that which illumines all this' appears relatively permanent, is by itself a great leap forward, but is not the entire truth. Thus inspite of this knowledge the person keeps suffering though relatively less. Such people have become 'introvert' in the real sense of the term. Their fascinations for extraneous things gets reduced drastically, they seem to have more time & energy at their disposal. There is quitude in their minds and thus the intellect becomes all the more sharp & subtle. They can now become sensitive to subtler & finer things of life, and overall stand apart from the rest. This viveka is by itself a great blessing, but there is still miles to go before he can sleep or rather awake.

The thrust of the knowledge of vedanta is to thereafter reveal that which is the very substratum of the knower, known and the process of knowing. That substratum is not really an object of our knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term, for the simple reason that to know

the substratum of the knower, we have to transcend this knower. We are no more a knower. With the negation of the knowership that which remains is that which is revealed as the truth. While in a fragmented state we may have turned inwards because of some understanding about that which is transitory, but are far from truth. This fragmentation has to drop for the unfragmented to get revealed, and mind you, our ability to discriminate doesn't call for physical separation of permanent and impermanent. In spite of the apparent fragmentation, the person can 'see' that which is 'not fragmented'. Study of Vedanta makes this power of discrimination all the more sharp & clear. As far as the requisite of the student is concerned, it refers only to his realisation that all that is *drishya*, seen is impermanent, and that which is *dr̥g* or the seer is permanent. Rest of the knowledge is the Guru prasada brought about by the study of vedanta.

THE THREE BASIC TENETS OF VEDANTA



ri Sankara sums up the entire message of Vedanta in three crisp aphorisms - Sutras. They are (a) Brahma Satyam, (b) Jagat Mithya, and (c) Jivo Brahmaiva naparah.

Brahma Satyam :

Brahman is the all pervasive life principle, consciousness. Not the conditioned conscious-

ness which manifests at the level of brain, but 'that' which exists before & inspite of the manifestation too. Not 'consciousness of something', but the very conscious principle as such. Contrary to what some people believe that 'life' is a product of some chemistry, the Upanishads thunder that Consciousness is that which is the ultimate truth, the timeless & transcendental reality. It exists first and matter follows after. This is not only what the scriptures reveal, but also what is logical too. If we look at matter - the atoms, the electron, proton etc then we find that these things are so perfectly created & organised that there has to be some intelligence working. That which existed before to have brought about such an orderly & beautiful creation has to be a conscious entity. We can never imagine the whole process getting started with lifeless, inert matter. Consciousness alone has to be the first & eternal reality. Rest is created, and is thus perishable. That is what this sutra reveals. Brahma Satyam. The word satya means that which exists in all the three periods of time. Past, present & future. That which transcends time, and is thus

timeless. That which exists at all times, that which cannot be effaced by time. Consciousness is that which not only exists at all times but also at all places. It exists as the very truth of all that is. It is the atma of everything - living or non-living things. It is our basic essence, our truth too. That is the God which we all worship.

Jagat Mithya :

The word Jagat embraces in itself this entire world, this cosmos. All that which is or can be an 'object' of our knowledge. It includes not only the gross but also the subtle 'objects'. The thoughts, emotions, the energy all come under this word 'Jagat'. That which is near or far, inside or outside, now or later, good or bad everything is part of this Jagat. This word has been described as referring to that which is 'Jayate gachati iti jagat', i.e. that which is born & dies is jagat. Birth & death are movements in time. That which is in time constantly changes, there is a constant flux. Something starts this process of activation & manifestation of time

and thus we see this dynamic flux. A realm of experience presents itself in front of us. What exactly starts this process is a different matter, but the point here is that all what is thus brought about is ultimately transient, is not ultimately there. It is comparable to being in a dream world. Something activates the process of dreaming, and when it does get activated we see a realm of experience which is not ultimately there. Mithya is that which is not there in all three periods of time. That which had a birth at a particular time and that which will certainly die at some point of time. It is there in this present moment, because of some reason - known or unknown. The above aphorism of 'Jagat Mithya' thus implies that all what is available for experience is transient.

Mithya also implies that which does not have the capacity to give us that which we basically seek. It is certainly beautiful, in fact very beautiful, it is also true that 'objects' of the world alone are useful for our worldly needs & purposes, but at the same time this is also a

fact that we basically remain where we were. It is like eating a dream food, with which we never satiate our hunger. However much we eat the dream food, we will still remain basically hungry. Whatever we have sought in this world may have helped our life to get comfortable & organised, but has certainly not helped us in eliminating the fundamental desire 'to seek' something more. Like hunger the seeking still remains as it is. The only difference is that it now manifests differently. That which is Mithya does not have any independent existence, thus it is not really dependable, for the simple reason that it itself is perishable. Whatever our heart basically seeks will never be got from this Jagat. That is the implication of this sutra. It is something to be seen in a detached way & not taking too seriously. Whatever happens in the world never really matters, knowing this a person should not plan to aggrandise & enjoy, he should rather serve & give. This philosophical tenet, which is a fact of life provides us a logic & basis for our religious values, culture & even the real goal of life.

Jivo Brahmaiva naparah :

This sutra means that 'every jiva - the apparent limited & finite entity is basically the infinite & limitless Brahman, and nothing else. The truth & essence of an individual is the truth & essence of this whole world or rather God. Every Jiva is basically God himself wearing a cloak of limited equipments, and moreover, identified with ones equipment he lives a limited & transient life. It is basically a case of non-apprehension followed by mis-apprehension of the truth of oneself. We take ourselves to be limited and therefore we are & remain limited. Body & all our equipments are certainly limited in time & space but 'I' who knows and objectifies all these is not. A seer is always different from seen. We are conscious of the body & mind complex so we have to be different from them. We are that which knows, that which illumines, that eternal life principle - Brahman. The Upanishads reveal that whoever knows his or her true reality is a healthy person, rest are diseased. They are certainly not at ease, there seems to be some

bug in them. It is the bug of mis-apprehension of ones true self as a limited guy. If we were really limited then someone 'could' have helped us, but when we just erroneously take ourselves to be limited then it is something which God also cannot do anything about, except come and provide right knowledge. It is we who have to pause, think, deliberate, meditate & realise. Everything of this individual gets changed, except the 'I' - the self-effulgent, blissful essence. One who knows that alone lives a true life which every human deserves to live. That alone was the secret of all saints, sages & even the avatar purushas. This alone is the real teaching of all our scriptures.

The awakening of limited Jiva to the realm of limitless Brahman is not a journey in the realm of time, but it is by transcending the very time, by right knowledge. Karma is a means to attain something in the realm of time, so it is not really relevant here. With karma we attain that which is unattained. In karma we turn our attention to that which should be rather than that which

is. So in order to awake to our true self, one has to keep aside all cravings to 'do or achieve something'. One has to relax and be highly observant and see some fundamental facts of life & our true self. That which is limitless & infinite is not something to be attained but that which is to be known. It is already attained, one should realise that 'I am already that', We just have to directly know it. All sadhanas are directed only for this ultimate goal of life. This is the objective of sanyas & Moksha. Drop the hankering for everything, relax, and see that which alone is.

Consequences of the opposite :

If a person does not understand & see these facts directly then it is obvious that the fellow will take resort to that which is its opposite. Let's see what will be the consequences of that. Such a person is too fascinated by the glare of the world, he will remain an extrovert, and also an eternal seeker. To live an ego-centric existence will be his destiny, and to face the music

THE THREE BASIC TENETS OF VEDANTA

of egocentricity an unavoidable fact. Inside him there will always remain a sense of lack and outside he will continuously keep on seeking something or the other. He will take worldly things too seriously, and will be able to go to any extent for achieving such worldly things. Such people alone play dangerous games with nature and will still not be satisfied with it. Resorting to that which is opposite amounts to create & produce the devils. Communicating these tenets of Vedanta alone amounts to helping the individual in particular & also the world at large. This is what all Rishis declared, this is what Lord Ram & Krishna lived and this is what Bhagwan Sankaracharya worked & lived for. Lets go into these deeply and see these facts of life. Lets redeem ourselves with true knowledge.



RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Related like science
& technology :

Religion & Philosophy are like two sides of a coin of a life based on the eternal truths of life. Taking resort to one at the cost of other brings about disastrous consequences. Swami Vivekananda had once said that "Religion

without Philosophy is superstition, and Philosophy without Religion is mere idealism". They are both inter-related as the proverbial blind and the lame man. One can see but cant walk, while the other walks and sees not. Philosophy reveals the truth, and with the precepts of religion we tread to the sublime goal revealed by philosophy. These two terms can also be compared to the often used terms of science & technology. One reveals facts while the other helps us translate that in our day to day life.

Philosophy :

Like Pure Science in philosophy also one has to go into simply understanding facts & aspects of life. Who am I ? What is this creation ? How has it come about ? Who is the creator ? What is the truth of life ? What is my goal ? What can be the means to attain that goal ? What is happiness & sorrow ? etc etc. The whole thrust is for understanding the secret of life in its entirety. But unlike the methodology of science which goes about on its pursuit of truth only on the basis of objectively understanding what is directly perceptible, the path of

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

philosophy does join the various bits & pieces and even tries to see beyond to present a hypothesis of holistic picture, which of course has to be subsequently tested & confirmed on the basis of our personal experiences. From effect to cause is the path of science while from cause to effect is the path of philosophy. Einstein once said that "Let me know the desire of God, rest are all details".

The Vedic philosophy reveals that there exists a transcendental & eternal reality which is of the nature of Sat-chit-anand i.e. that which is pure unconditioned existence, consciousness & bliss, therein called as Brahman. From that alone this entire creation has come about, in that alone it is sustained and into that alone it goes back. The nature of this creation is such that the basic reality remains untouched and unchanged. This has been termed as the "Vivarta" wherein an effect is brought about without effecting the cause in any way. This being a fact the creation is compared to a superimposition and the cause as the substratum. The implication of this fact is that inspite of any changes there exists a level which remains unaffected by all change,

inspite of all problems at the level of mind there exists a dimension which is free from all limitations and problems. This fact is verifiable by anyone at any place and at any time. The awakening of a person to this dimension of his self is one of greatest fulfilling experience of life, it has been termed as Moksha - liberation. That is the ultimate goal of human life. The entire culture centers around this fact of life. He who has awakened to that dimension alone is worshipped & emulated. All Gods symbolise an awakened one and also motivate all to tread the path to that subjective awakening.

Religion :

Once we are aware of some basic facts of life then the next obvious thing to do is to bring about whatever necessary changes so as to facilitate the subjective awakening. There will lots of things in which we have to give great attention, and there will be things from from we have to dissociate. There will be do's & dont's, all aimed at either turning our attention to that, or helping us get prepared for the in-depth enquiry & awakening. Religion addresses every aspect of our life -

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

relationships, duties, social setup, life styles, culture etc. The crux of all religious practices is to bring about great faith in the existence of that eternal truth called God, and also facilitate bring about an integrated & holistic personality. This is the basic thrust, rest are all details. The objective & veracity of all religious practices is to help attain the above objectives. If the religious practices do not help bring about these then obviously there is something fundamentally wrong with either the understanding or the following up of religious practices.

The Vedic philosophy & religion are highly acclaimed all over the world by various philosophers for their time-tested and verifiable tenets. It is the oldest living culture. Not only the Advaita Vedanta philosophy but even the Sanatan Dharma is full of so unique & perfect tenets that when the great Sri Adi Sankaracharya discussed them with the Buddhist teachers during his times, then the nihilist philosophy of Buddhism was literally wiped off from the land. It is indeed a matter of great pride to be born in this land of Vedic philosophy & Sanatan Dharma.



Vedanta Ashram

*Bringing Love & Light
in the lives of all with the
Knowledge of Self*